

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 20956-11946

Title: DEPLOYMENT OF RPV DETACHMENT

Operation/Exercise Name: RESTORE HOPE

Observed: 20 Feb 1993

Originator: 15TH MEU

POC: COL NEWBOLD Commercial: (873)151-3744 DSN: 000011

5. (U) OBSERVATION:

Marine forces in Somalia would have operated with greater effectiveness had they possessed RPV/UAV capability.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

During Restore Hope, 15th MEU and MARFOR lacked a dedicated day/night aerial reconnaissance and surveillance platform. Helicopters were employed in this role, but they did not have the loiter time, stealth, or night observation system (NOS) necessary for the comprehensive execution of aerial night reconnaissance and surveillance. In Somalia, the MEU escorted food convoys, searched for and seized weapons compounds/caches, and executed numerous foot and mechanized infantry security patrols. For each of these missions, the remotely piloted vehicle (RPV) would have been helpful. With its available time on station, the RPV would have enabled coalition forces to observe and protect, from a distance, the nongovernment organization (NGO) food distribution centers and food drop-off points on convoy routes and in remote villages. The RPV range (approximately 100 km) would have enabled commanders to maintain surveillance of key lines of communication, day or night. The loiter time, low aural signature, forward looking infrared (FLIR) NOS, and real-time downlink to a ground station would have significantly enhanced marfor reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities. Although high winds and heavy air traffic in Mogadishu may have restricted RPV flights, the inland terrain and weather were ideal for RPV operations. The airfields at Bale Dogle, Baidoa, and Kismayu provided hard surface runways, taxiways, and parking aprons, and minimal air traffic to conflict with RPV flights.

7. (U) LESSON LEARNED:

The RPV contributes in many ways, both complementing and supplementing ground reconnaissance and

surveillance capabilities. For sustained operations ashore, the RPV should always deploy.

8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

(A) That an RPV/UAV detachment be a routine deployer in contingency operations.

(B) That HQMC (C4I2/R&P) implement programs/plans to reduce the footprint required to deploy the RPV/UAV system.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

The Remedial Action Program (RAP) Working Group reviewed and categorized this as a NOTED item.

OPR: AVN
